

# ARIZONA MILITARY MUSEUM COURIER

Published by the Arizona National Guard Historical Society, Inc.

Spring 2012 Issue 39



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND ARIZONA MILITARY MUSEUM HISTORY

The Arizona National Guard Historical Society is a private non-profit corporation established under the laws of Arizona and consistent with the Internal Revenue Code. It is the sponsor of the Arizona Military Museum. The Historical Society's purposes are: "To enhance the appreciation of the history of Arizona and the contributions of the Militia of Arizona and the Arizona National Guard to the State of Arizona and to the Nation..." (Bylaws, Article I, Section 1). To accomplish its purposes, the Historical Society shall strive: "...to discover and memorialize the history of the Military of Arizona, the Arizona National Guard, and the general military history of Arizona, and to establish and maintain a museum on land leased, owned, or otherwise controlled by the Society." (Id.). The policy statement states that the Historical Society is "...to portray events, persons, and other historical information relating to...the military service of Arizonans in wars and other military actions in Arizona and around the world."

The Articles of Incorporation for the Arizona National Guard Historical Society were executed on March 28, 1975.

The Historical Society was incorporated on April 25, 1975 with the aforementioned purposes and the added purpose as stated in its policy statement: "...to portray events, persons, and other historical information relating

...the military service of Arizonans in wars and other military actions in Arizona and around the world."

On July 14, 1978 the Arizona National Guard General Staff dedicated a portion of the old arsenal building for a museum for the Historical Society.

In January 1980 the director and officers were elected who were committed to creating the museum. They did most of the demolition and construction to establish the museum.

In December 1980 the Adjutant General designated the museum an official permanent historical activity of the Arizona National Guard.

In April 1981 the General Staff dedicated the space for the East Room of the museum.

On September 12, 1981 the Arizona Military Museum had its Grand Opening.

On July 13, 1999, the Arizona National Guard Historical Society and the Arizona National Guard executed a Memorandum of Understanding reaffirming their historical relationship and mutual support.

On September 30, 2006, the Arizona Military Museum celebrated the 25th anniversary of its opening.

On September 11, 2008, the Museum was designated an official Arizona Centennial Legacy Project.

Published by the Arizona  
National Guard Historical  
Society, 5636 E. McDowell  
Rd, Phoenix, AZ 85008-3495

**President/Director:**  
Joseph Abodeely

**Vice President:**  
Thomas Quarelli

**Secretary:**  
Anna Kroger

**Treasurer:**  
Klaus Foerst

**Board of Director Members:**

Jean McColgin  
Harry Hensell  
Mary Hensell  
Jim Bunetta  
Domingo Gonzales  
Jim Dunham  
Rachelle Ferraro  
Mike Lentino  
Josh Miller  
Jim Bolek

**Ex-Officio Board Member:**  
MG Hugo Salazar

**Museum Hours:**  
Saturday and Sunday  
1:00pm - 4:00pm

**Admission:** Free

**How to Contact Us:**

**Phone:** 602.267.2676  
**Or:** 602.253.2378  
**Fax:** 602.253.3342

**Editors:**  
Joseph Abodeely and  
Rachelle Ferraro

**Submit inquiries and address  
changes to:**  
The Arizona Military  
Museum, 5636 E. McDowell  
Rd, Phoenix, AZ 85008-3495.



# Arizona National Guard Historical Society

*"Lest We Forget"*

## REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Dear Members and Friends:

Arizona's history had been influenced by ancient Indian peoples; the Spanish and Mexican cultures; ranching, farming; mining; great educational institutions; and others. But the military has always played a vital role in the development of Arizona, too. Many who have served in the military have helped Arizona make it to its Centennial. Arizona became a state February 14, 1912, and this year we celebrated its Centennial. The Arizona Military Museum is proud to have participated in the creation of the military pavilion which displayed Arizona's military history and replica weapons purchased in part from a grant from the Arizona Historical Society. We are especially proud to have been portraying the military history of Arizona leading up to the Centennial in the Arizona Military Museum for over 30 years.

This last year the museum received four artifacts worth mentioning. We were donated an M-38A1 Jeep. CMH provided a Mississippi rifle (the type used by the 1st Arizona Volunteer Infantry). We also were the recipients of a colorful collection of hundreds of miniature soldiers presented in two display cases. Most recently, we received an original colonial era flintlock, smooth bore, long "rifle". It's a beauty.

We have been continually working on archival materials—photos, records, reports, letters, etc. by preserving them in acid free materials and by organizing their storage. We bought a scanner to help in this process. This is truly a work in progress.

Community events were important for the museum this last year. On March 29, we celebrated Arizona Vietnam Veterans Day in the museum's Vietnam Room. In May, we celebrated International Museum Day, and in November, we celebrated Veterans Day, and we held a memorial ceremony in the museum honoring fallen German military. We also have provided special tours all year long for the public.

The Arizona Military Museum and the Arizona Department of Veterans Services co-hosted a special Dinner in Honor of Arizona's Vietnam veterans at the Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino in October. General Barry R. McCaffrey was the guest speaker. LTG Claude Kicklighter, Director of the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War and MG Hugo E. Salazar, AZ Adjutant General, were special guests attending with the 430 plus other attendees. Arizona's Vietnam veterans in attendance were honored and presented a specially designed medallion in a cherry wood display case. A Vietnamese color guard posted the colors, and the 108th Army Band provided music during the event.

We now have Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans returning to our society to face medical, social, and economic problems. We should honor them while at the same time remembering that most living veterans are Vietnam veterans. We must honor the Vietnam veterans, too. Better late than never.

Joseph E. Abodeely, Colonel, USA (Ret)  
Director, Arizona Military Museum

# Arizona's Rocky Road to Statehood

**By Marshall Trimble, Official Arizona State Historian**

In order to get a modern-day perspective on the euphoria Arizonans felt on February 14, 1912, it would be about the same as if the Cardinals won the Super Bowl; the Diamondbacks won another World Series; or the Phoenix Suns finally won an NBA Championship (or if it snowed in Yuma; whichever comes first.)

The territory had lusted the equal status that came with statehood much like a teenager waits anxiously for his/her first driver's license.



*Arizona State Capitol.*

Arizona's bane was Indiana Republican Senator Alfred J. Beveridge, chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories. He took a 3-day fact-finding trip to the territory and concluded it contained nothing but "cactus, heat, rattlesnakes, gila monsters, scorpions, hell-raising cowboys, cattle rustlers, murdering Indians, polygamous Mormons, illiterate Mexicans and Democrats."

In 1904 Congress made an unsuccessful attempt to combine Arizona and New Mexico. The New Mexicans voted 2 to 1 in favor since the capital would be in Santa Fe. The Arizonans scuttled the effort by voting overwhelmingly against it.

Congress could stall statehood with lame excuses for only so long but everyone knew it was inevitable and finally on June 20, 1910 Congress passed the Enabling Act allowing a constitutional convention.

However, the progressive Arizonans included liberal measures that shocked easterners including the recall of elected officials.

They were warned that President William Howard Taft would veto the constitution over the recall but they stubbornly refused to back down and on August 11, 1911 he did just that.

"Take it out, and when statehood is granted, put it back in," they were advised. So it was removed, the president

signed and after statehood they put it back in.

President Taft finally signed the proclamation on the morning of February 14, 1912. The news reached Arizona by telegraph at 8:55 A.M. and celebrants took to the streets, many firing their six shooters in the air.

At Tucson a holiday was declared and all 254 students at the University of Arizona were excused from classes for the rest of the day. At Bisbee enthusiastic celebrants set off a huge charge of dynamite that nearly blew off the top of a mountain.

In Phoenix a telegrapher delivered the news to an impatient wedding party. Hazel Goldberg and Joe Melzer waited anxiously to become the first couple married in the new state. The ring bearer that morning was a fidgety three-year-old youngster named Barry Goldwater.

Washingtonians who still viewed Arizona as a wild and woolly bunch of hellions sagely predicted that it would be at least a century before an Arizonan would send anybody to the nation's capital who would make a difference.

Arizona didn't take long to demonstrate the kind of leaders it produced. Over the next one hundred years Arizona's voters sent an illustrious group that included Senators Carl Hayden, Henry F. Ashurst, Ernest W. McFarland, Barry Goldwater, Paul Fannin, Jon Kyl, John McCain; Representatives John Rhodes, and Morris Udall; Secretaries of the Interior Stewart Udall and Bruce Babbitt, Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, and Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

Not bad for a bunch of Mexicans, Mormons and hell-raising cowboys.



*Arizona's First Senate (1912).*



# Broad Brush History Includes Arizona Military

By Jim Turner, [www.jimturnerhistorian.org](http://www.jimturnerhistorian.org)

When Gibbs Smith Publishers asked me to write a pictorial history of Arizona that would include more than 500 images, I knew I would have to rely on the 65 Arizona Historical Society Certified Museums that I had worked with from 2002 until my retirement in 2009. I had been studying Arizona history for more than 30 years at the time, and began thinking about writing my own complete history more than two decades ago.

The book is called *Arizona: A Celebration of the Grand Canyon State*, and has gotten rave reviews from *True West Magazine* and *Phoenix Magazine*. My web site, [www.jimturnerhistorian.org](http://www.jimturnerhistorian.org) has a list of book signing presentations around the state.

I finally got my chance to write an Arizona history book, but there was a catch. I only had 60,000 words to tell the story. I could have focused on the 100 years between 1912 and 2012, but many of Arizona's most interesting events happened before statehood. I decided to write a "broad brush history" from the forming of the Grand Canyon to modern biotech industries, golf resorts, and Native American art galleries. Of course that would cover a lot of military history.

I had been teaching Arizona history and writing detailed course outlines for years, so I knew what to include, but the trick was to fit it all in, and get pictures to illustrate every era.

Although the first two chapters deal with geography, geology, and prehistoric and modern indigenous Arizonans, the first soldiers march onto the scene in chapter 3. Francisco Vasquez de Coronado led several hundred Spanish conquistadores, as well as more than a thousand Indian allies, across Arizona in 1540 in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola.

Spain switched from the sword to the cross (soldiers to missionaries) in the 1620s with Franciscan missionaries sent to the Hopi mesas, and Father Eusebio Kino earned a place in the history books for establishing more than twenty missions in southern Arizona and northern Mexico in the early 1700s.



U.S. Soldier in U.S.-Mexican War.

It wasn't until the Pima Revolt in 1751 that the soldiers re-entered the area in force, establishing the Presidio de Tubac in 1752. An Irish mercenary, Don Hugo O'Connor, realigned the chain of forts from the Gulf of Mexico to California and chose the site for the Tucson presidio (a fortified village) in 1775.

Jumping forward to the Mexican-American War, General Stephen Watts Kearny led the Army of the West, which included Lt. William Emory and Kit Carson, across Arizona to California. They were followed weeks later by the Mormon Battalion, blazing the first wagon road

east to west across what would become Arizona. Many thanks to the Arizona Military Museum for the picture of a manikin dressed in a Mexican-War-era uniform.

No military history would be complete without the Bascom Affair, and several scholars were consulted to correct previous misconceptions about this key event. Clear details about the Battle of Picacho with the help of historians Boyd Finch and Andrew Masich – the book relies on, and re-examines, previous scholarship while condensing the facts to readable summaries.

From the Navajo Long Walk to General George Crook's winter campaign of 1872-73, Indian conflicts are an important part of at least four chapters of the book, since at one time more than one quarter of the U.S. military was stationed in Arizona. The details of all Geronimo's breakouts, captures, and surrenders are sorted out with the help of leading scholars, wrapped up clearly with dates and locations.

Once again we take long strides forward to the Arizona Rough Riders and Pershing's, the Buffalo Soldiers, and Punitive Expedition against Pancho Villa in Mexico. Arizonans played their part in World War I, and its famous hot dry climate became a boon once again for soldiers recuperating from being gassed in the trenches.

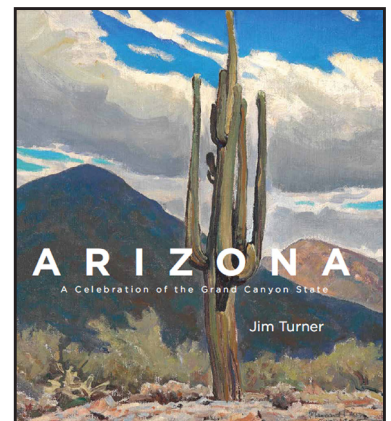
The Code Talkers are noted for their contributions to World War II's Pacific Theater, including the eleven Hopi code talkers so often overlooked. Also skipped over is the 158th Regimental Combat Team, a unit of the Arizona National Guard known as the "Bushmasters."

My history professors taught me that history can only be viewed clearly after a span of more than 50 years, so my summary of Arizona's military history stops at World War II and the impact of the G.I. Bill (co-sponsored by Arizona Senator Ernest McFarland).

The sixty-thousand-word restriction imposed by the publisher made it impossible to go into great detail, but the monumental task of condensing all of Arizona's history, including its military chronicles, into less text than an average novel was admirably tackled. The limited text left plenty of room for historic photographs of the major players, including Apache Scouts personnel Al Sieber and Mickey Free, Geronimo, General "Black Jack" Pershing, and even the guardhouse where Geronimo was held. My deepest gratitude goes out to museums all over Arizona, especially the Arizona Military Museum, for contributing rare never-before-published images of Arizona.



San Carlos Reservation Guardhouse that held Geronimo.



Book Cover.



# Arizona Best Fest in Phoenix

By Colonel Joseph E. Abodeely, USA (Ret.)

Arizona is celebrating its 100th Birthday this year, and part of the celebration was the two day Best Fest in Phoenix around the State capitol and adjacent area. There was food, fireworks, singing, dancing, and several large tents or pavilions representing Arizona's history and cultures— western towns, breweries, wineries, Indian, Hispanic, sports, science, energy, fine arts, natural resources, and military. Members of the Arizona Military Museum were instrumental in designing the military pavilion which served as an impetus for other pavilions which followed.



Spanish Colonial Period in Arizona Military Pavilion.



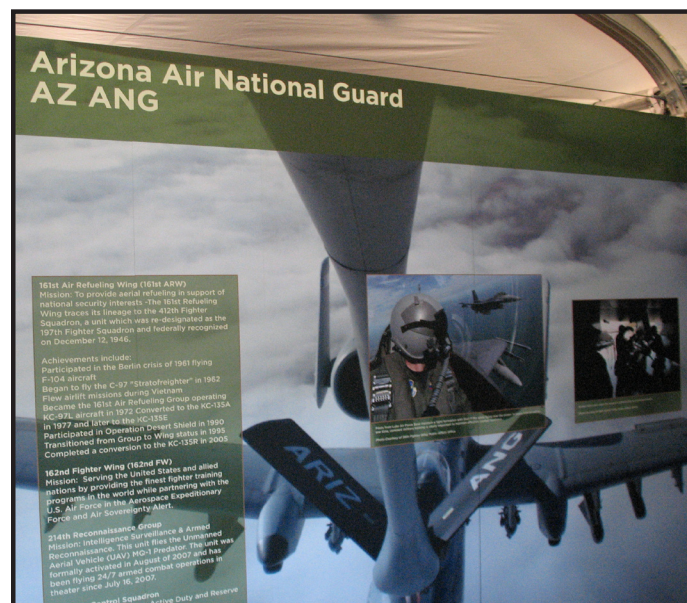
Vietnam Display in Arizona Military Pavilion.



Military Pavilion Prior to the Crowds.



Public Enjoying Arizona Military Pavilion.



Arizona Air National Guard Display in Arizona Military Pavilion.



WWI Display in Military Pavilion.

**Bravery is the capacity to perform properly even when scared half to death.**

-Omar Bradley



# On the Border to Afghanistan

By Colonel Joseph E. Abodeely, USA (Ret.)

On March 9, 1916, Mexican rebels led by Pancho Villa attacked the United States Army garrison at Columbus, New Mexico. All available troops were rushed to the United States--Mexican border, but there were not enough regulars to patrol such a vast area. On May 9, the National Guard of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas was called into Federal service. On June 18, the entire National Guard,

except for coast artillery units, was called. Within days the first of 158,664 National Guardsmen were on their way to camps in Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. General "Black Jack" Pershing led this American Expeditionary Force.

redesignated as the 158th Infantry; and servicemen were sent to France to serve as fillers in various units. At the end of WWI, President Woodrow Wilson had the 158th Infantry band serve as his honor guard. The 158th Infantry, which was activated for WWII, attained fame as the 158th Regimental Team ("Bushmasters"). The 102d Infantry also served in the Pacific in WWII.

The 1st Arizona Infantry (later 158th and still later the 1/158th Infantry) and the 102nd Infantry (later the 1/102nd Infantry) National Guard units both served on the Arizona border. They both served in WWII, and they had a connection again in Afghanistan. The 1/102nd was relieved in Afghanistan by the 1/158th Bushmasters in 2007. From on the border to Afghanistan—the two units came full circle.

**Editor's note: Special thanks to BG Alberto Gonzalez who was the commander of the 1/158th Infantry in Afghanistan for photos and historical information.**



On the Border (1916).

National Guard units immediately began patrolling the border, and columns of Guardsmen soon dotted the desolate landscape from Arizona to Texas.

Among the many units on the border was the 2nd Connecticut Infantry. On June 20, 1916, the regiment assembled and began preparations for the long rail journey to the border. Within a week they were on a troop train headed for Nogales, Arizona. The patrols along the border were important. Guardsmen were physically toughened and officers and NCOs gained experience in handling troops in the field. The 2nd Connecticut mustered out of Federal service on November 1916, only to be mobilized again in February 1917. The training that the regiment received in Arizona would be important after the United States entered the First World War two months later. Re-designated as the 102d Infantry and assigned to the famous 26th



1/102nd (Connecticut National Guard) Crest.

"Yankee" Division, the regiment fought in six World War I campaigns.

In October, 1917, the 1st Arizona Infantry, which had been called to the border service, was



1/158 Infantry (Arizona national Guard) on Patrol in Afghanistan



1st Arizona Infantry Officers on the Border.



1/158th Infantry HUMVEEs in Afghanistan.



"Bushmasters" Crest worn by 1/158th Infantry.



Arizona 1st Infantry Officers on the Border.



LTC Alberto Gonzalez meeting with Afghan locals. (Left front)



LTC Gonzalez (Commanding Officer of the 1/158th Infantry) in Afghanistan (Far right.)



# Arizona Statehood Day

By Colonel Joseph E. Abodeely, USA (Ret.)

On February 14, 1912, Arizona became a state. On February 14, 2012, we celebrated Arizona's centennial—its 100 years of being a state. There were many events at the state capitol and Centennial Legacy Projects and displays were enjoyed by the public. Your Arizona Military Museum had two tables of artifacts including replica weapons on display. Harry and Mary Hensell, Tom Quarelli, Jim Bolek, and Joe Abodeely manned the display area and visited with the public. The replica weapons were a big hit, especially with the youth who seemed to be able to identify the weapons. I hope they know their school studies as well as they knew the weapons.



*Joe talking to visitor.*



*Jim, Joe, and Tom at museum exhibit table.*



*Jim, Joe, Harry, and Mary at museum table.*



*Visitors at museum exhibit table.*



*Jim guarding the museum display.*



*Museum exhibit.*

## AIR CAVALRY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OPERATION PEGASUS

By Colonel Joseph E. Abodeely, USA (Ret.)

### AIR CAVALRY

Air cavalry as a concept was innovative. As executed by air cavalry units, it was phenomenal. The 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam was the quintessential air cavalry organization which operated effectively using traditional principles of cavalry, but the mode of transportation was helicopters instead of horses. **Air cavalry was light infantry deployed by helicopters.** In order to better understand the concept of air cavalry and its potential for the future, it is important to fully understand US Army basic fighting doctrine and the mission of the infantry. The US Army's basic fighting doctrine since the early 1980s is called AirLand Battle which involves stronger Interservice integration. The mission of the infantry is to close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver to defeat or capture him, or to repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack. Only close combat between ground forces gains the decision in battle. Infantry rifle forces (infantry, airborne, air assault, light, and ranger) have a key role in close combat situations.

### MANEUVER

The infantry must maneuver as part of its mission whether on foot, horse, vehicle, parachuting from an aircraft, or by helicopter. Maneuver is one of the nine principles of war. It places the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power. It is used to exploit successes, to preserve freedom of action, and to reduce vulnerability. It continually presents new problems for the enemy by rendering his actions ineffective, eventually leading to defeat. At all levels of war, successful application of maneuver requires agility of thought, plans, operations, and organizations. At the operational level, maneuver is the means by which the commander determines where and when to fight by setting the terms of battle, declining battle, or acting to take advantage of tactical actions.

### AIR CAVALRY TACTICS AND EQUIPMENT

The 1st Cavalry Division was the first "air cavalry" division in the Army. During the Vietnam War, the official mission of the 1st Air Cavalry Division was to provide reconnaissance for larger field force commands, participate in stability operations, and provide security and control over the population and resources in the assigned area. While airmobile operations used helicopters to fly over difficult terrain and maneuver behind enemy defenses to air assault into targeted objectives, the 1st Air Cav (as it was

often called) was most successful in the traditional cavalry role. **The division excelled in missions to reconnoiter, screen, delay, and conduct raids over wide terrain.**



*Air Cavalry troopers at pickup zone.*

The "combat air assault" was the zenith of the attack phase of "air mobility". Once the enemy was located and contact was made, air cavalry troops could be deployed by helicopters from less critical situations and could be quickly concentrated at the point of battle. Instant radio communications enabled commanders who were often in their "command and control" helicopters to monitor scout ship transmissions and to direct responsive air landings in the midst of the most fluid combat situations. As the infantrymen deployed from the helicopters with rifles and machineguns blazing, gunships patrolled overhead providing close-in covering fire with rockets and machineguns. Rapid helicopter airlift of howitzers and ordinance assured that infantry fighting for remote and isolated landing zones would have sustained artillery fire support. Enemy opposition was stunned and overwhelmed by this swiftly executed initial aerial onslaught—this gave the 1st Air Cav an immediate reputation for tactical success.

The maneuverability of the 1st Air Cav was as a result of its helicopters assigned directly to the division. The UH series Iroquois helicopters, called "Hueys" by the light infantry (who called themselves "sky troopers"), provided the majority of the unit's helicopter transport and gunship capability. The Hueys transported food, water, ammunition, personnel, and "medivaced" the wounded and dead. Prior to the Cobra AH-1 gunships, the Hueys were fitted with machineguns, Gatling guns, and 2.75 inch rocket pods. The gunships were ARA (aerial rocket artillery) for the infantry. When the Cobras replaced the Hueys as gunships, they often operated with OH-6 light observation helicopters (LOHs) in "hunter-killer" teams to search and destroy the enemy.

The airmobile division depended on the twin-rotor CH-47 Chinook—the principal Army air cargo transport helicopter—to airlift its essential artillery and heavier supplies to support the sky troopers wherever they went.



The Chinooks could carry either 44 troops or ten thousand pounds of cargo. It was common for sky troopers to see Chinooks carry a 105 mm artillery piece or a sling load of supplies or a large rubber bladder containing fuel. The Chinook's importance was stated in the division motto, "If you can't carry it in a Chinook, you're better off without it."

The Chinook is still in service in modern warfare. In Afghanistan, the Chinook can fly missions in the thin air at the altitudes of mission requirements where Blackhawk helicopters' lift capability is more challenged. This is a technological challenge for the Army of the future.

#### AIR CAVALRY SUCCESS IN VIETNAM

The airmobile division entered combat in 1965 in the Ia Drang Valley of Vietnam's western border against North Vietnamese Army regulars, and the "air cavalry" concept was first tested here. The campaign, which began on 27 October 1965, was called a series of operational code words (LONG BEACH, SILVER BAYONET, GREEN HOUSE), but became historically designated after the main Ia Drang Valley west of Plei Me. During a month of sustained action, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) sought out, located, and met regular NVA in combat and won some of the fiercest Vietnam battles. Helicopter-delivered infantry dominated the zone of operations, setting the future pace of wartime air mobility and validating the revolutionary role of aerial cavalry.

The Ia Drang Valley campaign was the first division size air assault victory, and suspected doctrinal truths about Airmobility operations were verified—they had to be characterized by careful planning and followed by deliberate, bold, and violent execution. Although the division could helicopter troops throughout the battle zone, regardless of terrain restrictions, faster than any other organization in the Army, and decisively engage distant enemy units by vertical air assault, this flexible striking power placed a very high premium on thorough preparation and the availability of sufficient reserves.

Despite the significant problems and high cost, the division's Ia Drang Valley campaign prevented an initial NVA victory over the Special Forces Camp Plei Me and remains a magnificent military success. The Ia Drang campaign taught the 1st Air Cavalry many lessons which

proved valuable in subsequent operations. The 1st Cavalry continued to have successes in airmobile operations—the 1966 costal campaign of sustained pursuit (offensive action against a retreating enemy); the 1967 costal campaign of clearing operations (finding and destroying NVA/VC and implementing pacification programs); cavalry screen (protecting Saigon); cavalry exploitation (Cambodian invasion); and cavalry raids (Khe Sanh and A Shau). But the most dramatic success was at Khe Sanh.

#### KHE SANH AND OPERATION PEGASUS

The enemy's primary objective in the Tet offensive in early 1968 was to seize power in South Vietnam and cause the defection of major elements of the Vietnamese armed forces. The enemy apparently also expected to seize by military action large portions of the northern two provinces and to set up a "Liberation Government." Khe Sanh's seizure would have created a serious threat to US forces in the northern area and cleared the way for the enemy's advance to Quang Tri City and the heavily populated region. General Westmoreland stated, "There is also little doubt that the enemy hoped at Khe Sanh to obtain a climacteric victory such as he had done in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu in the expectation that this would produce a psychological shock and erode American morale."

Khe Sanh was located fifteen miles south of the Demilitarized Zone and about seven miles from the eastern frontier of Laos. The Khe Sanh base functioned primarily as a support facility for surveillance units watching the demilitarized zone and probing the outer reaches of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in nearby Laos. Khe Sanh was in the center of four valley corridors leading through the mountains to the north and northwest of the base. To the south, Khe Sanh overlooked Highway Nine, the only east-west road in the Northern Province to join Laos and the coastal regions. A 3,900 foot aluminum mat runway which during favorable weather conditions could accommodate fixed-wing aircraft up to C-130 transports was a key feature at Khe Sanh.

In the early morning hours of 21 January the enemy had made his long-awaited move against Khe Sanh. The main base was hit by withering artillery, rocket and mortar fire and probing efforts against outlying defensive positions to the north and northwest. South of the base the enemy attempted to overrun the villages of Khe Sanh and Huong Hoa, but were beaten back by Marine and South Vietnamese defenders. In this initial action, enemy fire destroyed virtually all of the base ammunition stock as well as a substantial portion of the fuel supplies. In addition, the all-important air strip was severely damaged forcing a temporary suspension of flights into the area.

From these beginnings, the battle lines at Khe Sanh were tightly drawn around the main base and its adjacent



AH-1 "Cobra" gunship.

mountain strongholds. For the next 66 days world-wide attention would remain riveted on Khe Sanh where the enemy seemed to be challenging the United States to a set battle on a scale not attempted since the great communist victory at Dien Bien Phu.

LTG (then MG) Tolson, the 1st Cavalry Division commander, was tasked with defining and executing OPERATION PEGASUS, which had a three-fold mission: One, to relieve the Khe Sanh Combat Base; two, to open Highway Nine from Ca Lu to Khe Sanh; and, three, to destroy the enemy forces within the area of operations.

Although Marines and ARVNs (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) augmented the airmobile division, it was the operational planning and maneuverability of the air cavalry that dominated the execution of the three-fold mission of PEGASUS. The following excerpts of OPERATION PEGASUS are taken from LTG Tolson's report on Airmobility, 1961 to 1971.

*The basic concept of Operation PEGASUS was as follows: The 1st Marine Regiment with two battalions would launch a ground attack west toward Khe Sanh while the 3d Brigade would lead the 1st Cavalry air assault. On D+1 and D+2 all elements would continue to attack west toward Khe Sanh; and, on the following day, the 2d Brigade of the Cavalry would land three battalions southeast of Khe Sanh and attack northwest. The 26th Marine Regiment, which was holding Khe Sanh, would attack south to secure Hill 471. On D+4, the 1st Brigade would air assault just south of Khe Sanh and attack north. The following day the 3d Army of the Republic of Vietnam Airborne Task Force would air assault southwest of Khe Sanh and attack toward Lang Vei Special Forces Camp. Linkup*

*At 0800 on 8 April the relief of Khe Sanh was effected and the 1st Cavalry Division became the new landlord. The 3d Brigade airlifted its command post into Khe Sanh and assumed the mission of securing the area. This was accomplished after the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry successfully cleared Highway Nine to the base and effected linkup with the 26th Marine Regiment. The 3d Brigade elements occupied high ground to the east and northeast of the base with no enemy contact. At this time it became increasingly evident, through lack of contact and the large amounts of new equipment being found indiscriminately abandoned on the battlefield, that the enemy had fled the area rather than face certain defeat. He was totally confused by the swift, bold, many-pronged attacks. Operations continued to the west.*

*Highway Nine into the Khe Sanh Combat Base was officially opened on 11 April after the Marine engineers had worked day and night to complete their*

*task. In eleven days the engineers had reconstructed over fourteen kilometers of road, repaired or replaced nine bridges, and constructed seventeen bypasses. Numerous sections of the road had to be cleared of landslides and craters.*

*There was great potential for the continued air assault operations that were abruptly brought to close. The enemy was vulnerable; he was abandoning his equipment; and, he was completely disorganized. The decision to expedite our withdrawal immediately upon completing our primary mission-the relief of Khe Sanh Combat Base-was predicated on a long-range forecast which predicted April as the last possible time for air assault operations in the A Shau Valley before the heavy monsoon rains.*

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF OPERATION PEGASUS**

The most important cavalry raid in Vietnam was the 1st Cavalry Division's attack to reach the isolated Marine fortress at Khe Sanh. A "raid" can be defined as a rapid attack into enemy territory



CH-47 "Chinook" lifting 105 mm howitzer.

to carry out a specific mission. Without the intention of holding terrain, the raiding force promptly withdraws when its mission is accomplished. The 1st Air Cav accomplished its three-fold mission in only eight days, stayed a few days longer for repair of Route 9, and then deployed on another major raid into the famous A Shau Valley.

LTG Tolson's description of OPERATION PEGASUS showed that detailed planning and aggressive maneuver and execution made the operation successful. He further commented how PEGASUS was a "classic example of airmobile operations".

*Operation PEGASUS-LAM SON 207A from its inception to its final extraction from the area of operations will long stand as a classic example of airmobile operations. The operation dramatically illustrated the speed and effectiveness with which a large force can be employed in combat using airmobile tactics and techniques. The enemy's repeated failure to quickly comprehend the quick reaction time and capabilities of the 1st Cavalry Division led to his defeat, forced withdrawal, and eventual rout from the battlefield. The enemy was helpless and confused, suffered great losses of men and equipment, and failed in his mission to block and delay the relief of Khe Sanh.*

Further significance of Operation PEGASUS was that it involved all the services. This Interservice integration



was prescient as the AirLand Battle doctrine was adopted in the early 1980s.

Tolson wrote:

*No summation of Operation PEGASUS would be complete without mention of the great team effort of all the Services-Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force. The operation was an ideal example of the synchronization of massive B-52 strikes, tactical air support and artillery firepower with ground maneuver. The South Vietnamese troops gave a splendid performance. The fact that we were able to co-ordinate all of these operations in a single headquarters was a commander's dream. There was no question of command or who was calling the signals.*

After Vietnam, the “threat” was the Soviet Army armored and mechanized divisions attacking across the Fulda Gap in Europe. The Army reorganized the 1st Cavalry as a triple capability (TRICAP) division in 1971, combining armor, airmobile, and air cavalry brigades. The TRICAP experiment became bogged down in bureaucratic ineptitude, and by August, 1980, the 1st Cavalry was transformed into a heavy armored division.

Since Vietnam, some Army thinkers have recognized that The integration of infantry mobility and target acquisition capability with the speed, agility, and firepower of helicopters is a potent combination; but the current force structure does not realize that potential. Nor does it capture the helicopter’s air cavalry possibilities. In June, 1968, the Army began to convert the 101st Airborne Division to an airmobile configuration. The next month the 1st Cavalry was redesignated the 1st Air Cavalry Division; and the 101st Airborne Division became the 101st Air Cavalry Division. This designation was brief; and in August, the units were renamed the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). One can see this subtle transition from “air cavalry” to “airmobile” to “air assault”.

In October 1974, it dropped the parenthetical title of “airmobile” in favor of “air assault” and accepted the implied doctrinal change. That doctrine sought to fuse manpower, weapons, and aerial transport with cavalry doctrine while air assault integrated attack, transport, and observation aircraft with the fighting elements of the division. They are different from each other. The 101st Air Assault Division maintains organic helicopter assets and ensures continuous availability of aviation assets to meet unique tactical requirements, but it is **NOT** an air cavalry division.

## CONCLUSIONS

The future US military will be smaller, more technologically oriented, and have swift moving forces to perform their missions. Defense Secretary Gates said:

*The strategic rationale for swift-moving*

*expeditionary forces, be they Army or Marines, airborne infantry or special operations, is self-evident given the likelihood of counterterrorism, rapid reaction, disaster response, or stability or security force assistance missions. But in my opinion, any future defense secretary who advises the President to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should “have his head examined,” as General MacArthur so delicately put it.*



*Air Cavalry troops deploying at landing zone.*

President Obama announced to the nation that the military will be reshaped over time with an emphasis on countering terrorism, maintaining a nuclear deterrent, protecting the U.S. homeland, and “detering and defeating aggression by any potential adversary”.

It is the spirit—the attitude—the elan, and specialized training and equipment with intelligent innovation in tactics, technology, planning, and bold, aggressive, leadership as it was in the 1st Air Cavalry, which makes “air cavalry” whether executed by Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, or Marine or Air Force special operations forces. The largest successful cavalry raid (e.g., helicopter transport of armed personnel to kill or capture the enemy) in US history was the 1st Air Cav’s relief of Khe Sanh. The most recent notorious, successful “cavalry raid” was the helicopter transport of armed personnel to kill or capture Osama bin Laden.

Future military planning should consider “air cavalry” units (division, brigades, etc.) composed of specially trained and equipped organizations, not out of nostalgia, but out of a sense of what is best for America’s national security interests and what is most mission-oriented.

## About the author:

Joseph E. Abodeely, Colonel, USA (Ret) served with the 2/7 Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division, in Operation Pegasus and Operation Delaware (incursion into a Shau Valley). His military education includes National Defense University National Security Management Course), Air University War College Associate Seminar Program, JAG Legal Aspects of Terrorism Course and International Law Course. He has been the CEO of the Arizona Military Museum since 1980. His publications include *Divisive Barbarity or Global Civilization* (contributing author of “*Collective Security*”) and *Vietnam, “Breaking the Siege at Khe Sanh”* (October 2010).

## Dinner in Honor of Arizona Vietnam Veterans



Gen. McCaffrey with members of 108th Army Band



Attendees gathering before dinner.



Lam Bui, a former Vietnamese Ranger; "boat person", and now successful owner of Complete Print Shop.



Replica Vietnam weapons on display.



Vietnamese Color Guard.



Special Award given to Arizona Vietnam veterans



Colonel Joe Abodeely, USA (Ret), Co-Host.



Attendees at dinner.

**What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.**

-Albert Pike



Colonel Joey Strickland, USA (Ret), Co-Host.



Awarding the veterans, second from left, Col. Abodeely, General McCaffrey, Col. Strickland, LTC Kicklighter.

### CONGRATULATIONS!!

The AZ National Guard Historical Society would like to welcome new life member:

Kenneth L. Fields, USA (Ret)

Manual Davela, Jr.

William Hensell

Mary Hensell

Tom Alexander

Marc Mitchell

David Trotter

Stewart W. Day

### Dues are due!!

Annual membership is \$25.00 or life membership is \$250.00.

### WILL YOU HELP THE MUSEUM?

There are no paid employees, and the Officers and Directors on the Board are a working Board of Directors who created and maintained the museum since 1980 and opened it to the public. If you appreciate what they have done and continue to do, will you help by becoming an annual member for \$25.00 or a life member for \$250.00 of the Historical Society or giving a donation or a bequest to the Arizona National Guard Historical Society? Make your check out to AZNGHS (not to the museum). This will entitle you to *The Courier*, our informative newsletter, voting rights, and notices of key museum events—and help us pay operating expenses.